

LONG ISLAND

# Early review of South Fork Wind Farm project found power shortfalls during peak summer periods

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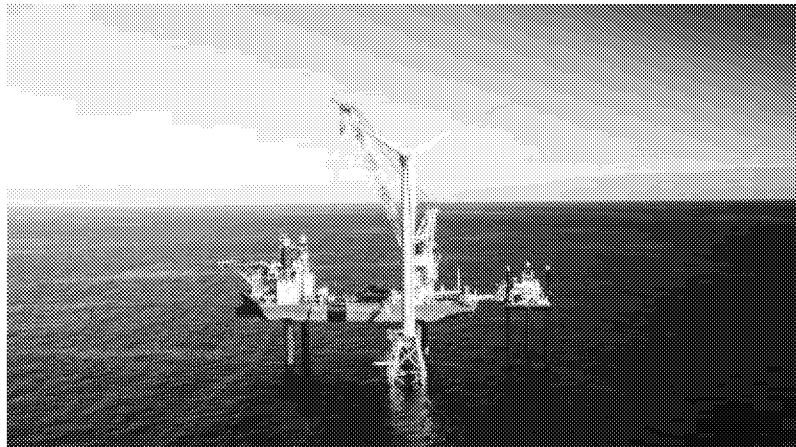
LIPA in 2017 decided to move ahead with the South Fork Wind Farm project despite internal findings that its ability to produce energy during critical summer-peak times would be limited to around half the days it was needed, according to a confidential review done for LIPA.

A copy of that review released earlier this year as part of a lawsuit filed by a ratepayer says even with the wind-farm operating, there'd still be power shortfalls on 77 of the 152 peak-summer days given the weaker summer winds and the South Fork's soaring appetite for energy.

LIPA has said the project was the most economical of the range of plans it considered in the request for proposals.

LIPA initially said the cost of the project it would add \$1.21 to average customer monthly bills.

The original \$1.62 billion contract award has increased to over \$2 billion, with greater power output.



Images displayed by the South Fork Wind Farm at a public forum in

Last Thursday, the nonprofit Government Justice Center filed a lawsuit on behalf of two Long Island ratepayers alleging that LIPA "ignored its own criteria for power production resources" in entering into a contract for the South Fork Wind Farm.

The suit calls the project's power, "unreliable ... because it depends on an intermittent resource to generate electricity."

The suit, filed in State Supreme Court in Suffolk County, alleges LIPA violated state procurement laws and "should be declared void."

In a statement, LIPA said its evaluation of the project, "took all technical considerations into account, including those described in the report, as well as the environmental benefits" of offshore wind.

"As with all wind projects, it was determined that the totality of benefits outweighed the variable nature of wind power," including on possible shortfall days, LIPA said.

"Thus, the awarded portfolio produced more benefits to customers than the large batteries which were determined to be not cost effective," LIPA said.

Developers Orsted and Eversource declined to comment on the suit.

The LIPA study was done as part of LIPA and PSEG Long Island's review of energy projects for the South Fork before the 2017 award of the wind farm project.

The study showed the utility could partially offset the summer power shortfall by adding battery storage units to the proposal, and LIPA ultimately adopted that plan.

But the study called for far more batteries than LIPA approved — 33 megawatts of storage compared with the 10 megawatts LIPA ultimately approved.

In the end, LIPA agreed to increase the size and output of the wind farm from an original 90 megawatts to the current 130 megawatts.

A megawatt of wind energy can power more than 300 homes.

"Without the battery, shortfalls occur on 77 of the 152 peak-period days, or about 50% of the days," the document states. "With the battery, shortfalls occur on 19 of the 152 peak-period days, or about 12%."

The South Fork Wind Farm, with a cable expected to make land in Wainscott, is expected to begin producing energy by 2023.

According to the study, the largest energy shortfall risk was in August, when 20 of the 30 days were expected to experience a shortfall, with no battery.

With 33 megawatts of battery storage, the number of shortfall days in August was reduced to 7.

The study examined two scenarios, with the more conservative approach finding shortfalls of up to 50% during the peak time.

A second probability review found shortfalls around 42% of the time.

Wainscott resident Si Kinsella, who plaintiff in several lawsuits that take issue with elements of the project, including the recent Government Justice Center suit, argues the project is economically unfeasible and would disrupt roadways where the project's land-based cable will run through Wainscott, including near his home.

Project developers Orsted and Eversource, in a statement to Newsday last Tuesday, said the South Fork Wind Farm would, "will help meet the area's energy challenge, delivering renewable energy when and where it's needed most and providing the most affordable way to meet LIPA's reliability and clean energy goals for the South Fork."

The companies said the project is "designed to help prevent summer power shortages on the South Fork. During peak summer hours, the wind farm will supplement existing power sources to help ensure the South Fork has sufficient power supply."

They also said newer, more powerful turbines will help reduce the footprint of the project from an original 15 turbine units to "no more than 12."

Also, LIPA has a pending request for proposals for 400 megawatts of new battery storage through 2030.

Kinsella said he was skeptical that toxic soil and ground water along the route will be properly tested and remediated.

Eversource officials said plans are in place to test soil and water removed during construction.

**By Mark Harrington**

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